Sky Bird #2

THEY SHOULDN'T BE COMPLAINING — ALL WE GOT WAS A ONE PAGE WRITTEN STORY!!
AFTER ALL, G.A. — THE CHALLENGERS WERE DRAWN BY SIMON & KIRBY TOO... WE CAN'T EXPECT TWO ORIGINS BY THE SAME ARTISTS FOR ONLY 25¢!!
DON'T SAY ANYTHING, FLASH — YOU AND ADAM STRANGE ARE THE ONLY TWO THAT RATED A FULL, COMPLETE ORIGIN REPRINT!!
THIS ISN'T HOW IT WAS WHEN WORLD'S FINEST CHANGED TO TEN CENTS!!
WONDER TOT... WONDER GIRL — I FEEL LIKE A WAS-BEEN!!

IN THIS ISSUE:

SECRET ORIGINS?

SECRET ORIGINS —

STILL CLASSIFIED

TOP SECRET

Some weeks ago, when I first saw the ads in a random issue of SUPERMAN for a 25-center called SECRET ORIGINS, I began anticipating its arrival with at least a ghost of the expectation I felt at waiting for a Tom Mix Magnet Ring when I was about half my present age. But, like my father used to tell me, expectation is greater than realization. I was disappointed with DC's SECRET ORIGINS.

Like television — it was a great idea that did not work out.

There are, broadly speaking, eight stories in this issue of eighty pages (which is twelve pages more than the sixty-four page dime comics I dimly remember as a boy). Of these eight, only two are the authentic, unmut origin stories of their characters —— ADAM STRANGE and THE FLASH. And even here is a qualification — this is, of course, the origin of the "new", revived, revised Flash.

Two other stories have been cut — JOHN JONES, MANHUNTER FROM MARS has had, I believe, the last two pages chopped from the story, the pages telling of his first case as a policeman.

And I am certain that the CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN has been cut to a meaningless fragment. "You'll never get out of this alive, Challengers!" the villain snarls. "But they did," the caption assures us, "and they appear in every issue of CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN!"

The GREEN LANTERN story is the re-telling of the origin of the "new" (again) GL. But this is not the origin story from the first trial issue of SHOWCASE, rather it has been swiped from the first issue of the regular Green Lantern comic book. Both stories are substantially the same, but the "copy" instead of the original is used in ORIGINS. A matter of policy, one presumes.

The origin of WONDER WOMAN contains not one panel of Wonder Woman — and this is the origin of Wonder Girl, the embodiment of Wonder Woman's first or is it second childhood.

But we really come a-cropper when we get to the "Origin of the Superman-Batman team" and Green Arrow.

Retellings and revivals and cut-down casts of arms are bad enough — BUT THESE SUPERMAN-BATMAN AND GREEN ARROW STORIES JUST AREN'T SO! They are not the origins at all!

It's bad enough for the highly-touted Green Arrow

JIM HARMON

story to be a crummy little one-page text, but it at least could have told the REAL origin story.

The text tells of some Robinson Crusoe-type experiences of Oliver Queen, society playboy trapped on a desert island. Unlike most playboys, the first thing Oliver sought was food. To get it, he fashioned a bow and arrow and attached a line to his arrow to snare fish — the first arrowline! we are informed. Oliver follows this act of genius with others equally unparalleled since the age of the Neanderthals, traps some mutineers aboard ship, and returns to civilization where he discovers another expert archer, young Roy Harper, raised by a Sioux Indian Chief. Together they become known as Green Arrow and Speedy.

The only point of similarity between the REAL origin of Green Arrow published some fifteen years ago and the text-story appearing in SECRET ORIGINS is that Roy Harper was raised by a Sioux Indian. The REAL story is that Oliver Queen, society playboy, was out west, where he met Roy Harper. They were trapped in a cave by some crooks and fought their way out, using their bows. Queen used green arrows and one crook yelled, "Watch out for that green arrow!". Another, noticing how quick Roy was, exclaimed, "That kid's speedy!" Not being very original in themselves (after all, they were imitating Batman and Robin), Oliver and Roy used the names the thugs called them and invented costumes. And to this day, nobody has investigated that Queen who is living with a young boy (not only thirty-five and a half).

Now, Batman and Superman. This 'origin' of their meeting says that Batman first met the Man of Steel when he and Robin saved him from Kryptonite. ACTUALLY, Superman met Batman before the invention of Kryptonite, and perhaps even before Robin. Superman and Batman were both members of the old Justice Society of America in ALL-STAR COMICS, circa 1940. I have issues where they were honorary members and brought in sacks of loot at the end of the story for foreign relief, etc. This was just about the time Robin was getting himself born into four colors, and before they found out Superman had a weakness other than Lois Lane.

Of course, the first extensive meeting between Batman and Superman was not in comics at all, but on the radio. Batman and Robin were regular characters in the Superman radio show, circa 1945, in about every other story. Batman was played by Richard Coleman (better known as radio's Boston Blackie or Mr Dorothy Kilgallen) to Bud Collier's Man of Steel. They met when Batman was in trouble, not Superman.

A boy placed an ad in the Daily Planet, wanting to contact Superman. Clark Kent showed up and found the boy unconscious in a rowboat on a lake. In reviving him, Clark opened his shirt and found a red vest initialed "B". "Do you know who this is, Gang?" Jackson Beck, the announcer, demanded. "Don't tell anybody, and be sure to tune in tomorrow!" I did, and found out from Dick (Robin) Grayson that the great Batman was missing! Superman finally found him though, along with other important people, in a wax museum, sealed in a wax figure. It was not fatal, only uncomfortable — pulling the wax off took the fuzz right off Batman's insignia.

Later, Batman (who knew Superman's alter-ego) and Robin (who was too young to know the facts of a double-life other than his own) did rescue Superman from Kryptonite which the radio writers invented long before the comics. The Man of Steel was left with a junk of kryptonite on his chest, to starve to death. But somehow, he escaped and wandered in amnesia, becoming a baseball player and other things,

SKYHED, Vol.1, No.2, September, 1961, is a Super Squadron Publication, published monthly by Ron Haydock, 2771 San Marino, Los Angeles 6, California. Edited by Ron Haydock and Roger Foss. Price — 10¢ per copy. No subscriptions accepted, but trades of other fanzines, old clothes, Chinese fortune cookies or locks of hair from King the Merciless are cheerfully taken in. The number in the box indicates last issue you are scheduled to receive under present contract signed at offices of Howard & Pine.

before finally being located by the Dynamic Duo.

Superman, Batman and Robin appeared regularly in comic books in WORLD'S FINEST when it was a fifteen-cent book — the size of twenty-five cent books today. They were only on the covers though in the same scene — playing baseball; having a boxing match between Robin and Supe, Batty refereeing, and so forth. Then, when WFC went to a dime (half as many pages as the fifteen cent book for two-thirds the price), they were united in one story, because there wasn't any room for two long features or anything else.

This first WFC story harked back to an appearance billed as their first meeting in SUPERMAN magazine a few years before. Clark Kent and Bruce Wayne had met aboard a ship and had both romanced Lois Lane, for some ulterior (and abnormal) reason, like saving the crown jewels of Smogsbury. (Why romancing Lois saves the crown jewels, the Peoria State Fair Pig Championship, the Earth from Alien Invaders, I don't know — but you may have observed that it does.)

It was obvious that whoever wrote this "origin of ofthe Superman-Batman Team" didn't know much about Batman or Superman. In the story, Superman has fashioned a rather crude robot with bolts measeling his body, and with a "tape recorder" for a voice. Of course, for years, Superman has been able to make robots of himself absolutely life-like, and with more power for original thought and free will than most people I know.

After reading SECRET ORIGINS, I get the feeling that the publishers are in league with the comic book scalpers to keep from reprinting any real collector's items.

It could have been done differently.

They could have reprinted the first story of Superman, 1938. They used one page from it in the SUPERMAN ANNUAL.

The BATMAN ANNUAL was the best DC annual to date. (EDITOR'S NOTE: I certainly have to agree with whoever it was that said, "The English language is a living language; it is always changing." Why, I can remember when the word 'annual' meant "once a year' or 'yearly'...) It did use some old material. Nothing really valuable (can't let ten-year old gremlins drop their price below five dollars per copy for old comics with old material), but at least some gesture was made in the right direction. But even here, they used a re-telling of the Batman origin. They could have used the REAL original origin in SECRET ORIGINS.

While I have pointed out that some Wonder Woman stories have resembled bondage fettish, most stories could pass the censor. Particularly the real Origin of Wonder Woman (in the back of an ALL-STAR COMICS — Justice Society — of all places). They could have used that.

Certainly they could have used the origin of the "new" Green LANTERN from only a few more months back than the retelling of it in the DC magazine number one.

Better still, they could have used the origin of the "old" Green Lantern and matched it with the modern origin. And the same for the Flash.

Erm, there was only so much room there, not for my money Adam Strange and the

Challengers of the Unknown were out of place in SECRET ORIGINS, and I could have done without Green Arrow and John Jones.

I would have used:

The True Origin of Superman.

The True Origin of Batman.

The True Origin of Wonder Woman.

And the True Origins of both the "old" and "new" Green Lantern and Flash.

That is what I would have done.

Unfortunately, those who edit and produce comic books today are not the connoisseurs that many discriminating readers are.

They are in the business to make a buck.

But there are many cases where they could make their buck, and yet do something for the collector and to place the historical evolution of the comics. (EDITOR'S NOTE: Julius Schwartz, in the initial ATOM tryout in SHOWCASE, certainly took another step in the right direction by utilizing the telling of the origin of the "old" Atom with two or three old drawings of the Mighty Mite. The most discouraging factor to me about SECRET ORIGINS is that Julius helped edit it. I was surely expecting better things from him!)

I think my version of SECRET ORIGINS would have sold better.

And I wonder if somebody like Julius Schwartz, the most talked about comic book editor in the business today, will ever convince the top brass to experiment and see if the readers will buy issues of reprints of the true, authentic stories of DC's super-heroes.

Meanwhile, the Secret Origins remain a mystery --- still classified 'top secret' in the hidden case files at National Comics in New York.

SKY ALTITUDE FANS...

Have you ever wished you could rocket through the stratosphere like your friend and mine, SKY ALTITUDE? Have you ever wished you could be Sky's adventure-loving partner, SPARKY, for just one day? Have you ever wished you could be simply a part of the famed flying leader's peace corps?

Sky says: "Join my fan club, boys and girls, and share my many adventures with me."

Yes, this is your personal invitation from Sky himself to become a member of the world-renown SKY ALTITUDE FAN CLUB. The best part about it is that it's FREE!!! Simply mail a four-cents stamp to Gordon Gray, 2771 San Marino, Los Angeles 6, California, and by return mail you will receive a deluxe membership card enabling you to battle for Sale Under's chastity and other thought-provoking ideals. DO IT NOW!